



# NEWS RELEASE

OFFICE OF THE UNITED STATES ATTORNEY  
WESTERN DISTRICT OF MISSOURI

**TODD P. GRAVES**

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

## **HIGGINSVILLE MAN SENTENCED FOR THREATENING WITNESS, FIREARMS VIOLATION**

**KANSAS CITY, Mo.** – Todd P. Graves, United States Attorney for the Western District of Missouri, announced that a Higginsville, Mo., man was sentenced in federal court today for being a felon in possession of a firearm and tampering with a witness or informant.

**William Earl Cox**, 49, of Higginsville, was sentenced by U.S. District Chief Judge Dean Whipple this morning to 15 years in federal prison without parole.

On Dec. 31, 2003, **Cox** pleaded guilty to being a felon in possession of a firearm and to tampering with a witness or informant. He was originally charged in an indictment that was returned by a federal grand jury on July 22, 2003, in Kansas City.

**Cox** was arrested on April 11, 2003, Graves said, when the Lafayette County Drug Task Force executed a search warrant at his residence as part of an ongoing investigation into suspected methamphetamine manufacturing. **Cox** was sitting in front of a computer monitor, with a loaded Ruger 9mm pistol laying beside it. There was also a loaded 9mm clip and more ammunition in a box found in the file cabinet just under the bar where the computer was sitting.

Under federal law, Graves explained, it is illegal for anyone convicted of a felony to be in possession of any firearm or ammunition. **Cox** has a 1998 criminal felony conviction for unlawful use of a weapon; four 1984 criminal felony convictions for possession of illegal narcotics with intent to distribute, possession of marijuana with intent to distribute, cultivation of marijuana, and possession of a sawed-off shotgun; and two 1981 criminal felony convictions for possession of illegal narcotics with intent to distribute and possession of marijuana with intent to distribute.

By pleading guilty, **Cox** also admitted that he threatened another person with the intent to

influence, delay or prevent the testimony of a confidential informant in an official proceeding. On April 12, 2003, Graves said, **Cox** called the informant (the cooperating witness on the search warrant) and left a recording that said, "I guess you know you're a dead man, don't you ... if you don't, you will soon ... see ya, rat." Graves added that a letter was intercepted at the Lafayette County Jail from **Cox** to his son, which included a note at the bottom that read, "the trap has been set for the rat."

This case is being prosecuted by Special Assistant U.S. Attorney Bruce Rhoades. It was investigated by the Lafayette County, Mo., Drug Task Force, the Lafayette County Sheriff's Department, the Lafayette County Prosecutor's Office and the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives.

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This news release, as well as additional information about the office of the United States Attorney for the Western District of Missouri, is available on-line at  
[www.usdoj.gov/usao/mow](http://www.usdoj.gov/usao/mow)